

SPECIAL ISSUE

FREE Bangalore
36-page pullout on
ten coveted addresses

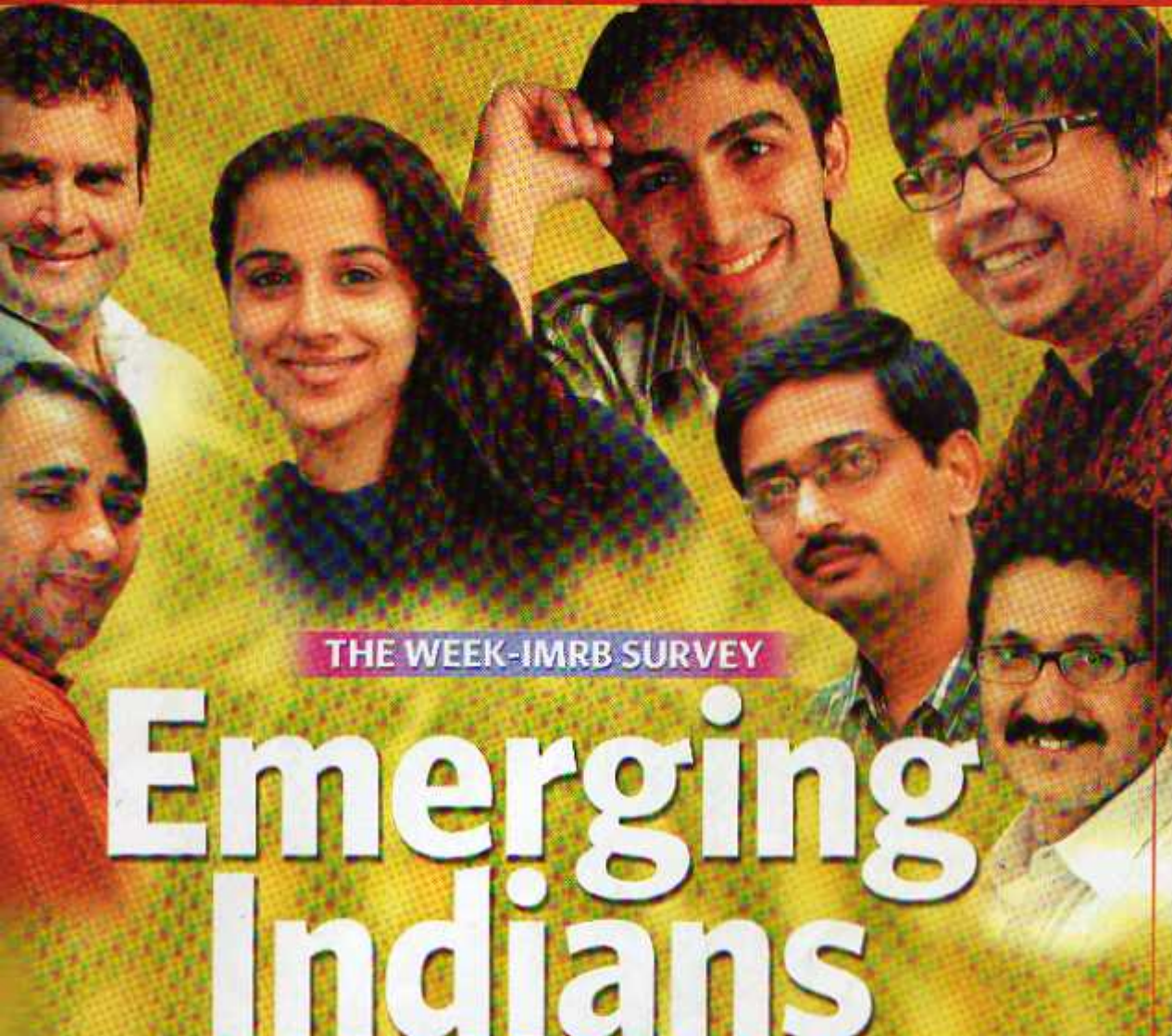
5, 2007

Rs 15

THE WEEK

25

**PRATIBHA'S CHALLENGES
THE ROAD AHEAD FOR
THE NEW PRESIDENT 44**



THE WEEK-IMRB SURVEY

Emerging Indians

POLITICS CINEMA LITERATURE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPORTS SCIENCE ADVERTISING

world champ, a Gandhi, a biz revolutionary...

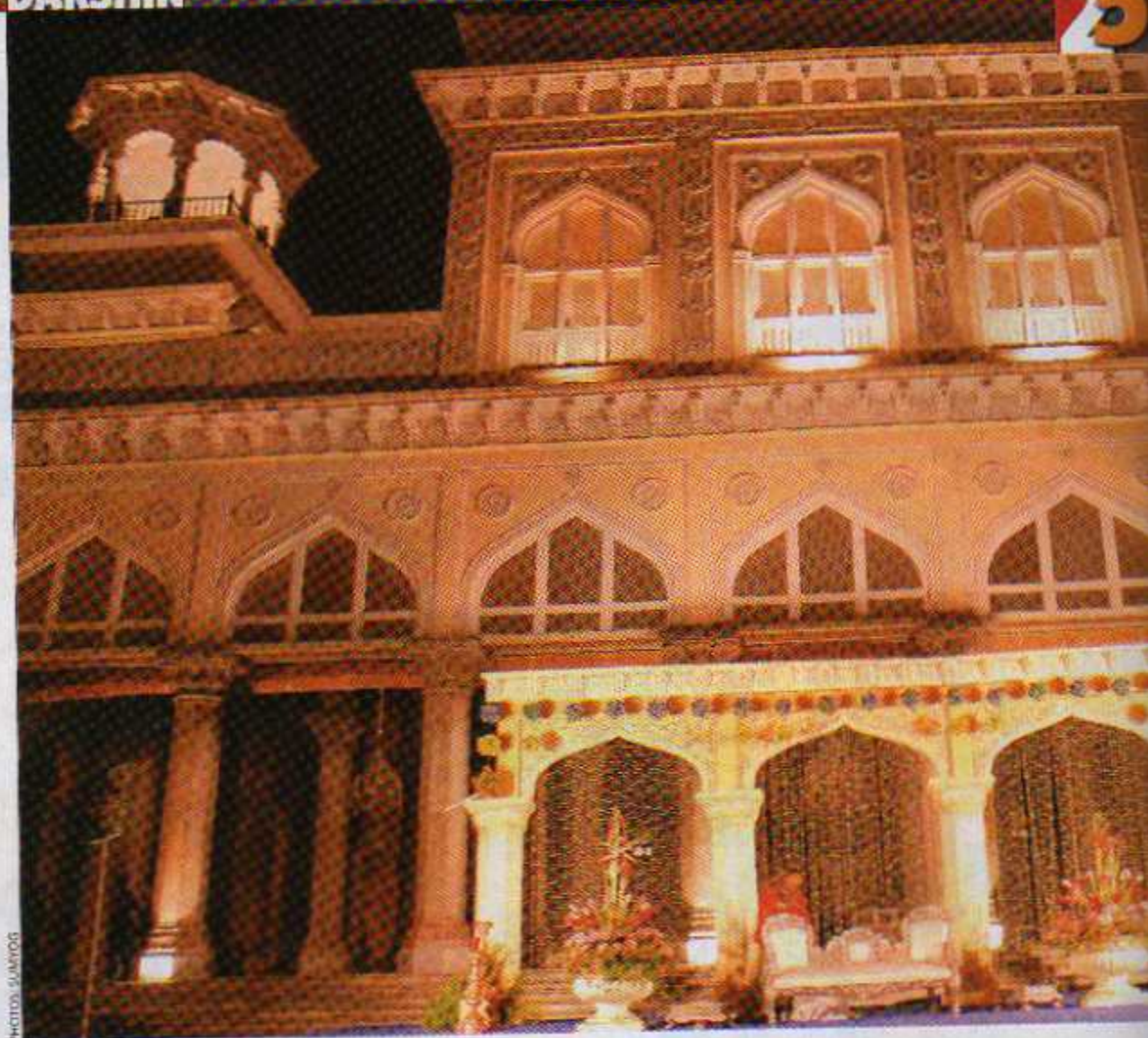


DAKSHIN

Wedding wows!

Consultants make the Big Day less knotty
with their 'we'll arrange it all' offer

*It's our business: Vidya
Singh and Rekha Rangaraj*



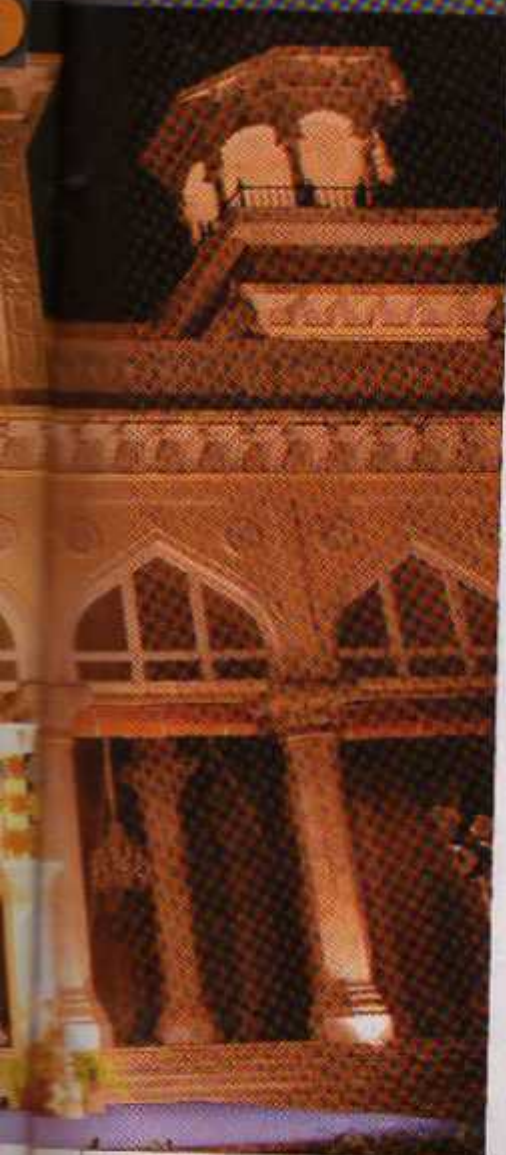
PHOTOS: SUMYOG

By Parvathy Ramachandran

It is said marriages are made in heaven, but preparing for the wedding may not be all heaven for the families of the bride and the groom. A typical big fat Indian wedding is not just a costly affair. It is also a lavish and stress-filled show, involving time, money and energy. Loads of dreams and detailing go into the day-long, or week-long, affair. No wonder, families of the bride and the groom look heckled and anxious in the run-up to that big day.

Remember J Lo in the film *The Wedding Planner*, Vijay Raaza in *Monsoon Wedding* and Rati Agnihotri in *Hum Tum*? They played wedding consultants in reel life. In real life,





Dream big: The Nizam's Palace in Hyderabad is an ideal setting; (left) the decorated banquet hall of Fisherman's Cove in Chennai

wedding planners in Chennai are into this job, with their innovative ideas and expertise in planning and organising weddings.

The experts come in handy with their ideas for designing and printing of invitations to booking exciting honeymoon packages. "Brides today are clear about what they want," says Rekha Rangaraj, who, along with her partner Vidya Singh, runs Sumyog, a wedding consultancy. "They tell us how they want the wedding to be, and we execute their ideas to perfection. Sometimes, the families of the bride and the groom have just a faint idea. So we suggest ideas to them.

Our suggestions and their decisions help us go to the next step," she says. The flowers for decorating the walls, the reception chairs, stage accessories, colour of the bridal trousseau, sweets in the menu and the like are decided after talking to the families of the bride and the groom.

Be it a *baraat* with horse-drawn carriages, or carrying the groom in a palanquin with accompanying music, they would organise them. If you prefer to wear a Mysore *peta* (turbans worn by those in Mysore and Kodagu), or want your wedding in a Rajput *haveli*, they help you with it. They help you make what your friends may have called your 'wildest imagination'—like getting married on a breezy island, with not just your families around, but also the stars and moon above—a reality. Even having a *nukkad natak* (street theatre) to make your reception a cultural evening; or a Las Vegas-style casino setting; a vintage villa for *mehndi*; a wedding inside the remains of a fort; or a Poruwa-Sri Lankan style reception followed by a poolside dinner with filmi *gaana* or Goan music, need not be far-fetched dreams anymore.

"I once arranged a wedding reception atop the Nandi Hills in Karnataka," says Ram Sridhar, who runs India Weds. An ex-L&T employee, Sridhar, who was fascinated by events, quit his lucrative job to pursue his dreams. "The next step was wedding coordination," he says.

"Planning and executing weddings involve a lot of hard work and stress. But we enjoy every moment of our work, and get excited when we see our concepts taking shape, particularly the sets," says Vidya Singh. They also arrange for DJs or *dandia*, if the client so desires. There would be hostesses to greet guests and for giving away the *thamboolam* bags. Sumyog's speciality is the Thai garlands, which the customers have always found to be unique and attractive. "We will be more than happy to arrange just the decorations or the *thamboolam* bags," says Rekha.

Rekha, Vidya and Sridhar had

They take care of

- Invitation
- Fixing venue: marriage halls/beach houses/gardens, etc.
- Shopping
- Putting up tents/*pondals*
- Floral, other decoration
- Catering
- Priest-Arya Samaj, civil weddings included
- Bride/groom's trousseau—designing/tailoring
- Horse for *baraat*
- Band/live music/DJs
- Mehndi, make-up
- Sangeet, choreography
- Gifts, return gifts & packing them
- Trousseau trays
- Transport for wedding party
- Gift, *thamboolam* bags
- Car decoration
- Nuptial bed decoration
- Travel, sight-seeing for guests
- Airline, car bookings
- Booking honeymoon package



Brides tell us how they want the wedding to be, and we execute their ideas to perfection.

REKHA RANGARAJ, SUMYOG

switched over to wedding coordination from event management. Jaimahee Jayaraman came from humble beginnings. First, a police head constable and then a coconut vendor, he slowly but surely climbed the stairs of success after establishing Jaimahee Marriage Services in 1990. "We do not fix the marriage halls. We leave it to the customer and take care of everything else," he says. His efforts to establish himself as a wedding planner when the concept was unknown in south India have paid rich dividends. He has arranged weddings in the families of celebrities like singer A.V. Ramanan, writer Anuradha Ramanan and artiste Jaiaram.

Interestingly, Sumyog and Jaimahee Wedding Services are not stuck on budgets. "We will work with any budget," says Vidya. Jayaraman says that budget has never been a constraint—he organises weddings even for a budget of Rs 50,000.

Ram Sridhar, however, feels that it is safer to take up weddings with a budget of more than Rs 10 lakh. "My fee would be 15 per cent of the total cost," he says.

The planners do not stop with coordinating or, as Rekha puts it, 'orchestrating' weddings. They are more than willing to take up 60th birthdays and wedding anniversaries too; these occasions have a lot of importance in the Indian milieu.

The consultant's job also brings with it immense satisfaction. Sums up Rekha: "We become part of our clients' families after getting involved in the occasion. Some of them gift us saris and treat us with great affection. This is the most rewarding aspect of our work." ■

SOUTH SPICE

Sons of the mulk?

HYDERABAD: A recent roundtable of Telangana organisations demanded revival of *mulki* (locals) rules. They feel the six-point formula evolved in the wake of agitations for a separate Telangana and Andhra in the 70s has not helped. The *mulki* rules—which came into force by a *firman* (order) of the Nizam in Hyderabad in 1919—debarred non-*mulkis* from being appointed to any service without the sanction of the Nizam. *Mulk* in Urdu means nation. The revival demand comes at a time when leaders across the world are looking ahead to strengthen the economic base of their respective regions so that globalisation does not affect the underprivileged. Are the Telangana leaders seeking a return to *Thuglaqian* ideas?

Legislative business

HYDERABAD: The Opposition Telugu Desam Party recently found a novel way to protest against the rise in vegetable prices. The party's women legislators played the role of vegetable vendors at a makeshift shop on the Assembly premises, while other TDP legislators played the part of customers. The prices were displayed prominently to highlight the Congress government's failure to control price rise.

However, the drama did not last long. Marshals removed the shops on the direction of the Speaker, K.R. Suresh Reddy. TDP legislators said the price rise had hit the common man hard, and trashed the government's claim that prices were under control at *rythu bazaars* (government-run vegetable markets). Now, who is left green faced—the government or the TDP?

Reel-thrifty realist

THRISSUR: Murali Nair, the young film-maker from Kerala who has become a favourite of the Cannes Film Festival over the last 10 years,



ILLUSTRATION BY VIJAYAKRAN

is singing paeans to the state government schools in rural areas. In *Unni: all about friends*, an Indo-French production, he captures the lives of a few school friends and their teachers during an academic year. The highly realistic film was shot at Anandapuram, Murali's own village in Thrissur district, with the decrepit government lower primary school as the main locale. The cast, comprising students of the same school and the villagers, gives the film an added touch of realism, and also seems to have cut down costs. That made sound film sense!

'Mixed' doubles!

CHENNAI: When squash champ Dipika Pallikal partnered commentator Charu Sharma to play tennis against film star Trisha and tennis ace Mahesh Bhupathi, it was indeed a 'mixed' doubles match. The foursome played an exhibition match on the Mahabalipuram beach, adjoining the ITC Fortune Chariot Beach Resort. It was a prelude to the WTA Tournament Sunfeast Open 2007 to be held later this year.

Predictably, the Trisha-Mahesh combine beat Dipika and Charu. Said Trisha: "I have always enjoyed tennis, and playing with Mahesh is like a dream come true." A delighted Dipika said, "I am not much of a tennis player, but being on the same court as Mahesh was a memorable experience."

By Lalita Iyer, Nikhil Raghavan and Vinu Abraham

Sign
CE
Ye
Name
Curren
Address
State
Phone
Chequ
favou
In case
In case
In case
Please
Card N
* On a
Fill in
* The pr
subscrip
weeks to
been do
THE
your we